

1999 New Zealand - published newspaper story

The following is an article that I wrote for the Newcastle Herald at their request.

It appeared in the Weekend Magazine on the Saturday 13NOV99 together with 5 of my photographs. The article that appeared in the paper was much edited. They had cut it down to about a quarter of its size. I have included it as submitted. I have also added some at the end. It is the extra stuff that the article didn't need to address.

Happy reading!

Looking back the last week has become just a blur. The plan had been to take the Ivan's yacht Gadget to Auckland and leave it there for him as a base to watch the Americas Cup. I would only stay a few days then fly home. Charley was going to be a tourist for a week or two.

The idea that we might end up calling for help, losing the boat and having to be rescued was not even considered. We had all the correct safety gear, of course. A 6 man life raft, jackets, two Epirbs and harnesses, but we only had it because we were supposed to have it. We weren't going to really need it. All that stuff is for other people.

Finally after a few delays, we were away. We didn't get away as cleanly as we would have liked, but New Zealand lay just over the horizon, about 1000 nm and ten days. I had said goodbye to the boys several times over the last few days and each time the departure day had been put back. This time the hug and kisses were for real. We threw off the ropes and motored our through Newcastle Harbour. Charley tidied up the ropes off the deck and I tied the anchor down securely. We wouldn't be needing it again.

There was a marina berth in Auckland waiting for us. We were well on our way past Nobby's when too late I remembered that Sandra, Josh and Rhys were going to wave to me from Horseshoe Beach. I looked back and it was too far to tell if they were there or not. Oh well, nothing to be done about it now. It would be dark in about an hour and I wanted to have everything well organised for our first night. I didn't want to be doing too much until I had got my sea legs.

The full moon rose just on sunset and while Charley had one of his precious cans of black beer for happy hour, Ivan used up the last of his phone battery sending cute messages to his wife Sibylle. The full moon was going to make the first night very pleasant. The wind was light and so we motor sailed, just so we could be well out of sight of the coast by morning. The second night out we dodged thunder and lightning storms all evening.

We were just having dinner when a front came through and laid the boat on its side. Charley was steering while Ivan and I ate down in the galley. Our food went everywhere, while we rushed up to dump the sails. The boat was laying virtually on its side. There was no time for wet weather gear or harnesses.

The rain pounded down and we were soaked in seconds. After the mainsail was reefed and the headsail was furled we scraped the remains of our dinner off the wall/ floor and finished it up cold. By midnight the moon was high and the storms were heading away from us. It turned into one of those beautiful nights, when the sky is so clear you could touch it.

Our steering arrangement, was two hours on watch steering and four hours off. This is how we passed the next week. Some days were hot with little wind and we made only about 80 miles.

These days were extremely frustrating, but it did give us a chance to lay around in the cockpit and tell some good stories. Some days I laughed so much my face ached.

Ivan had us trying all sorts of sail configurations just to get a little more speed out of the boat, but mostly it didn't help much. We snacked to pass the time and the other guys did a bit of reading. Our goal was to clock up an average of 100

nautical miles per day. That would make it ten days to the northern most part of the North Island, then about two more days down the east coast to Auckland.

Our first two days were a bit of a disappointment from the point of distance travelled, but were a real hoot as a social occasion. Then on about the third day out the wind swung solidly around and came out of the north. This was the sort of weather this boat was build for.

We made really good time, and covered 168 nautical miles in one 24 hour period. We were really excited as we were finally past half way and seemed to be on the down hill run. It was during this time period that water was noticed to be building up a bit in the bilge.

Everything was inspected and there seemed to be some sort of a weep at the stern near the steering gear. Ivan checked the bilge pump and cleaned it of any blockage. The problem didn't sound too bad and I didn't even bother to look. Nobody seemed particularly worried. Then after such a good couple of days, more calm weather.

We are all keen now and we changed sails willingly. We rigged the MPS, a big head sail, and it gave us a reasonable 4 knots.

Not bad for such a light breeze. Who could believe that we were in the middle of the Tasman Sea. I have seen rougher days on the lake. We all felt as though it wouldn't last and were expecting the weather pattern to change and have it come out of the south at some stage.

We had actually dropped down below our optimum line by about 60 miles and so the wind from the south or south west would be perfect. Looking back, maybe we wished for too much. One day we even motored for a while.

We had to charge the batteries and might as well have the engine idling and driving us forward as not. The self steering made it an easy day and we kept a casual eye out for ships. Sure enough one afternoon there is a ship. We look to be on a course that will cross their path very closely. Charley calls them on the radio. They are the "Cape York" out of Auckland and bound for Melbourne.

We alter course to give them plenty of room. Somebody waves to us from the bridge. Its strange how good it feels just to see someone different, even from a distance. The wind has swung and is now coming from the south. We pick up speed and make good headway east, also we win back some of the ground we have lost to the south. The wind is from the southeast though and is not making for the easiest or gentlest action on the boat. We are beating into the wind and it is starting to put more strain on the steering gear. Not the best situation. Other than the ship we have seen some wildlife.

There are quite a few albatross and a some other smaller sea birds. We have also seen dolphins most nights, swimming next to the boat in the dark. The dolphins are easy to see even at night. As they swim they cause the phosphorescence in the water to light up and it shows them as glowing darts of light. One afternoon, just on dusk, we even had the pleasure of a whale surfacing right near the boat. It surfaced and exhaled only about two metres off the port side of the boat. It surfaced again off to the starboard side of the boat and then disappeared.

Charley and Ivan check the rudder mounting again and it seems to have gotten worse. There is more water in the bilge and on closer inspection the pump is spinning madly, but not accomplishing much. It seems that it is pumping, but has lost its efficiency and can't lift the water high enough. We bail the water through the night about every hour. This keeps it below the floor. The next morning we changed the plumbing on the bilge pump so it doesn't have to lift so high. Straight out of the bilge and into the galley sink. Nothing fancy, but it works. We can stop bailing for a while and attend to other things.

We play around with the other bilge pump for a while, but it is beyond help. I am not convinced these submersible pumps are built for longevity. Maybe a fish tank is more appropriate. I finally have a look at the hull where the skeg is welded on and am surprised at the size of the cracks. They run for about 300 mm each side. Also, whenever the rudder is moved the cracks twist and open even more.

This is worse than I thought and we still have several hundred miles to go. It should be good enough to get us there! The day passes and the wind builds up. We all, quietly, take turns going to look at the cracks in the hull but don't say much to each other about it. We are all now a bit worried. The night comes on suddenly. A hot bowl of food each and we are pleased to get it, even though it all comes out of cans.

We all take a turn steering for a while so the others can eat. My turn at the helm and a ship appears off the port bow. Our second ship since leaving Newcastle and I spot them both. I think the other guys are jealous. The lights are not clear enough to be able to see its nav lights and so are unable to tell which way it is going.

Charley calls them on the VHF, Ivan turns on our Nav lights and I shine the torch on the sails to highlight ourselves. They can't see us and refuse to tell us their ships name, but by now I can see that they are slipping away to port. Even amongst all this there is humour. Every now and then someone will say something and crack the other two up. Not like a few days ago when we all laughed until we were fit to burst though.

There is an undercurrent of tension. The humour just discharges this occasionally. I get Ivan with the same joke that caught Charley a few days earlier. Charley has a great laugh as well at Ivan's expense, as he saw it coming. During the afternoon we have a bit of a conference and decide to pump up the inflatable dinghy, a dinghy only used for getting to shore when anchored.

It will give us some added security combined with the life raft. The wind builds through the afternoon. The wind is now solidly out of the south and the swell is rising by the hour. We had looked at the cracks and discovered that they ran the full length of the welds. Only the rudder shaft itself and the thick solid steel keelson are stopping it from coming right off. The inflatable dinghy is trying to blow away.

The wind has picked up another notch. Fortunately it is fully dark now, so I am saved the bother of looking at the waves and worrying. Every other wave hits the side of the boat with enough force to shake the rig and send a shudder through the hull. We are all conscious of the skeg and how much is holding it on.

It is difficult to steer the boat and take it easy on the steering as well. To effectively steer you need to be able to load up the steering as needed, and this is just what we mustn't do. The bilge pump seems to be handling it for the time being. Not having to lift the water and further than the sink has helped.

We are still steering a northeasterly course and running much to high. We are already 40 miles above the top line of the island and getting worse all the time. For every mile we head east we are making two north. If only we could steer effectively we could steer a bit tighter to the wind. It might not be the exact course we want, but at this angle we will miss the top of the island by many miles.

Getting further from New Zealand doesn't seem like a good idea at the moment. Ivan has the best wet weather gear and opts to steer. We now only have a mainsail up on the third reef. The forward motion of the boat is comfortable, but we are still doing 5 to 6 knots and the strain on the skeg is very obvious. Charley is a bit tense and tells us we need to slow down again.

I decide to go down into the boat and tidy up a bit. Really I want to get out of the wind and check on the skeg again. Charley is down there and between checking the bilge and the skeg spends some time snoozing. I make a comfortable nest on the lounge in the aft saloon cabin. I am cursing not bringing my own torch with me.

Charley has his and Ivan has the other in the cockpit with him. I turn the cabin light on occasionally to check the state of the hull. I have to conserve the boat batteries though. We have had no sun for a few days and the batteries must be getting low. We turned the freezer off earlier in the afternoon to save power. We could always run the engine to charge the batteries, but that is not the preferred way.

None of us are sick, but the vibration and diesel fumes are not something we really need. The water still seems to be constant but every time Ivan loads the steering up, we get a few little fountains sprout. Even the rudder stuffing box gland

is spurting a lot of water now.

The movement on the skeg has been allowing the rudder shaft to compress the gland material allowing water in. Ivan calls out the wind has increased again. It is time to pull down the main sail altogether and run with just run a bare mast. Charley and I throw out wet gear on and harnesses. This is the bit that really scares me.

I hate being on deck in these conditions in the dark. It's like working on the edge of a huge sheer cliff. Going off the side of the boat in these conditions would be akin the fall off the cliff, but slower. It is one of my greatest fears, the slow lingering drift in the ocean, knowing that they will never be able to turn around and find you. Rather than a harness in this case you would be better off with a sack full of bricks. I go to the mast and clip on to the spinnaker pole ring.

My heart is racing and the wind is blasting spray into my face. Turning my back on it and hooking an arm through a halyard coming out of the mast, gives me enough support to start to pull the sail down the track.

Nothing fancy tonight, just a big mess of sail with the wind trying to catch it. Charley passes me a sheet rope and I just lash up the mainsail so it can't thrash about. Ugly, but secure. No way I want to have to come out during the night to have another go at it. The boom is just lowered down onto the hand wires at the side of the deck. This is also tied down securely. I am already soaked and cold.

The three of us are back in the cockpit and we check the speed. Still doing 6 knots, with no sails up. Not what we hoped to achieve. We sit in the cockpit and consider our own thoughts. Mine include a lot less wind and three mild days sailing to the coast.

Thoughts of Auckland Harbour and a few beers in a local pub, while we pat each other on the back and tell each other how terribly brave we all are. Although this image in my mind doesn't have the clarity that it did a few days ago. We are all having some quiet doubts. Pumping up the inflatable dinghy was significant moment. We have all discussed the prospects of having to use the raft.

Not because we want to use it, but we are all agreed that we don't want to use it. Sitting in the lounge room in my mothers house and telling her not to worry, "we have a life raft", is a whole lot different to sitting on a "leaky" boat 200 nm off any land in a gale. The idea of getting that raft off its mount and to the side of the boat, seems daunting. Ivan assures me it takes two good men to move it in good conditions.

Then there is the prospect of inflating it then getting all three of us in it with our Epirbs.

Stories of life rafts inflating as per the brochure and then the wind catching them and having them tumble off into the darkness while the stunned crew watch in dismay, chill me to the core.

The survival rate of people in life rafts, compared to people on boats is not as good. No, the raft is a last resort, and we are not even close to that yet. There is no need for the three of us up on deck. Waves are washing into the cockpit quite often and it is cold and miserable. Ivan elects to stay and steer the boat while it runs bare poles before the wind.

Charley and I go below as there is still the water to keep and eye on and we might as well rest while we can. It is going to be a long night. Several hours later I hear Ivan come down exhausted. He tells me there is no point in steering and that he has tied the wheel over and we will lay across the wind for the rest of the night. He falls asleep on the floor in his wet gear.

We now have no watch on deck and we know we are in a shipping lane. I am very conscious of the fact that, even in good conditions, they have trouble seeing us. In these conditions we have no hope of being seen. Looks like we will just play the odds and take our chances. I go and find the other torch and retire to the saloon cabin for my vigil with the steering gear.

Sandra, Josh and Rhys are not far from my thoughts. I am annoyed that I can't remember which tooth it is that Rhys has

coming down. I am also continuously running contingency plans through my mind in the event we have to launch the raft. I get up for a while and go into my cabin and check my few things.

My Epirb is number one item, my knife and a block of chocolate. The GPS, camera and a used film wrapped in three layers of plastic bags. I throw them all in my small backpack, ready to grab in a hurry. My life jacket and harness I take up into the saloon with me, so they are handy in a hurry. I loop the torch through my hand so I can't lose it in the dark, and I take my position near the rudder again.

Every hard hit we get I check to make sure that it is still intact. If this thing decided to let go totally the boat will fill in about 15 minutes. I don't want to find out it has broken 14 minutes after it has happened. We will need all the warning we can get. Getting around in the boat is an effort. It is totally pitch black and there are plenty of things to run into. I have lost count of the times I have bashed my head in the companionway. I am trying to conserve the torch battery as I am not sure how long it will be needed.

The lounge is comfortable and with the boat pitching all over the place it takes little effort to stay secure on the port side with it being almost continuously heeled over in that direction. I drift off to sleep for a few minutes. What is that noise? Sounds like the canvas cover over the cockpit is coming loose. If the wind gets enough of a finger hold on it, it will go all at once. I go down and open the main hatch. Charley hears me and gets up to see what I am doing.

Going out on deck is no joy. I just can't believe the intensity of the wind. You can't see the swell, it is pitch black everywhere, but it must be huge and seems worse in the dark. I clip the cover back on and go below the silence is a blessing. Crashing on the lounge and being all wet with salt spray doesn't seem like a problem anymore. Only a few days ago, even a minor spill or mark on the furniture would have been rewarded with a sharp chip from Ivan about looking after the boat. Damn, the cover is loose again.

I go on deck to find that the inflatable dinghy is bumping around. Not much I can do about it. I would have to leave the cockpit to re-tie it. Nothing in the world could make me climb on deck at the moment. Either the inflatable will be there in the morning, or it won't. Thursday, rescue day. The long night had blended into the day. Laying on the lounge and looking up through the hatch I could see the sky lighten. Daylight at last.

I am fully aware of the way night affects your attitude and decisions. Things never seem as bad during the day. The light is a long time coming and I finally realise that it is only the last slither of the old moon rising, that is showing through the hatch. The daylight is still an hour away. I am still desperately worried about ships. We had seen two in the last two days and had to change course on account of one.

They are out here and I keep thinking about another boat that was run down near New Zealand a few years ago. Still, things are reasonably good. I slept for an hour or so and I have dried out.

The bilge pump must still be working as I had just heard Charley check under the floor a while ago. If the weather calms down during the day we still might have a chance of getting to the coast. The wind seems to have picked up again. Even without any sails up the boat is laying over at about 45 %. It must be howling outside, but through the hull only sounds like a whisper.

Each wave that hits the hull seems to be intended directly for the skeg. Maybe I am just being paranoid about it. It's not reasonable to assign personal feelings to a storm, but it does feel like it is taking a personal interest in us. At least with the boat heeled over it is nice and secure lying on the lounge. Looking up again and the hatch is a lot more defined against the darkness of the cabin. The morning has arrived for real this time.

A bit longer and I will get up and check out the sea. I am also keen to check out for ships. We have been all night and not keeping watch. I would hate to have kept the boat afloat all night only to be run over by a ship now. We are all up and getting around. We check under the floor and to our shock the water is almost up to the floor. The bilge pump is pumping away continuously, but not achieving anything. It has finally packed it up for good.

We are back to bailing and put in a big effort to clear away what has accumulated. We watch it for a while and it seems

that it needs bailing much more often. Charley and I climb into the cockpit and check out the seas. They seem to have built up over night, but the wind is no worse. The rope securing the wheel has become loose and needs lashing up again. Charley scrapes together two cans of soup and warms them up. We top this off with some spaghetti.

The food in the freezer will be starting to defrost and will need to be eaten, refrozen or thrown out. What a waste, all the lovely meatloaf that Ivan's wife, Sybille, had cooked. We will deal with it all later. The water need bucketing out again. It doesn't seem very long since the last time. We check the skeg and there are little fountains each time the plates twist. The water seems to be increasing dramatically. Still bailing. We have the bright idea of using the fresh water pressure pump to help clear the bilge but dismantling from the engine room, rewiring and replumbing seems daunting.

I finally realize that all we need do is cut the hose from the fresh tank and drop it down in the bilge water. Then we just turn the sink tap on and the water goes down the drain. Its helping, but not going to last the five or six days to Auckland. Ivan is looking worried. He asks me what I think we should do. This is one time that I am glad to be just a crew member. I know what I think, but don't want to influence his decision.

He brings up the subject of calling for help. The Epirb is the only real option if we need help and once that is put in motion there is no going back. We need to be really sure that there are no other options. We bail some more to help out the pressure pump and spend some more time looking at the cracks in the hull. The problem would be so trivial if we had a welder and power. Its not so much what the problem is, as where it is.

There is no way to fix it where we are. Our best chance would be if the wind would die down and the seas calm down to a flat sea. We could idle the engine and get maybe a bit closer to the coast, but it is still such a long way and we don't really have enough fuel to get all the way. The wind is still blowing wildly and even seems to have picked up again. It is mid morning and we have a long day ahead of us and an even longer night.

I worry that it will not last the next 24 hours, and even if it does. We have a conference. Ivan suggests setting off the Epirb. You can see that the decision is tearing him up. This is the final step. He knows that if we do this, then the boat is lost, it would have to be abandoned. The rescue organization is not interested in coming out this far to save the boat, only the people. It would mean taking our situation out of our hands and putting it completely in somebody else's. We put the idea aside for a while and I get us some food. Canned ham on Ryvita.

We bail some more water to help out the pressure pump, as it is not keeping up. We all inspect the rudder again. Ivan brings up the idea of setting off the Epirb again. The thought of the boat weighs heavily on all our minds, but he has the crew to think of as well.

I feel I should show more bravado and try to talk him into sticking with the boat, but I am reluctant to. Maybe, if I was ten years younger and wasn't so conscious of my boys at home ! We discuss the fact that we are better to do it early, rather than wait until later. We do not want to be getting rescued in the dark, nor do we want to let the problem escalate and be forced into the raft later in the day, or at all for that matter.

Finally one of us, not sure who, say the key words, "life before property". That decides it. We get the Epirb and look at the button long and hard, then finally press it. The light comes on and we tie it up in the cockpit near the wheel. There is no going back now.

Time ticks by and we go over the possible scenarios of who could pick up the signal and how long it would take.

We learned later that it was picked up by satellite and relayed to Bundaberg, also it was picked up by two trans Tasman airlines.

Ivan keeps asking how do we know it is working. I tell him the light is on and to have faith. We still have another EPIRB but I am keeping it for later, just in case.

Charley is on the radio sending out MAYDAY calls with no reply. After about two hours we get a call saying "This is Kiwi

Rescue 676 we have you on radar and are twenty minutes from your position".

We are stunned at how quickly the whole thing has happened. This is the best news ever. The New Zealand Orion arrives, roaring across the top over the boat, only a few hundred feet up. Every time I hear the radio operator go "This is Kiwi Rescue 676", I think it sounds like a very reassuring voice.

Even at that time we still have a chuckle about some of the pronunciation. Anything to lighten the situation.

The Orion proceeds to circle around and to tell us that they are currently trying to organize which is the closest ship to come and pick us up.

They question our safety equipment. We tell them we have a life raft and flares, life jackets and radio. Orion informs us they have two life rafts on board that they can drop to us if needed, although they seem disappointed that they won't get a chance to drop one.

Finally they decide that we might need a portable radio for if we need to take to the life raft. They proceed to fly over us once to drop a smoke marker. The second time they fly over they are to drop a bag with a radio inside and ballasted with drinks and chocolates. I watch as it approaches. Ivan is at the front of the boat and I am at the stern.

As it goes over the top of me I lose it in the glare, but I see it as it is flying away. I am thinking that they didn't drop the bag when it suddenly comes tearing out of the sky and lands about two metres in front of me. Scaring the hell out of me in the process.

The accuracy was amazing. People that really know their job. These guys were very important to us, but in the bigger world, this is just what they do, day in day out. A standard day at the office!

Charley checks in with the Orion every half hour as instructed. There is a bit of chit chat. It is good to keep hearing their voice. They accuse us of eating all their chocy bars and leaving them hungry.

The rescue crew inform us that they are there until we are picked up. They inform us there is another Orion back at base to take over if they have to leave, then they climb to 5000 feet to conserve fuel and wait. We are never left long without being told what is going on.

We are notified that a trawler is coming to pick us up. Then this is corrected to a ship and finally we get a name. The MV SAGAMI is 80 miles away and will take 4 hours to arrive. The Orion does all the talk with the ship until it is in range. Then Charley starts getting instructions from SAGAMI regarding pickup.

The Ship comes into view. It is huge and is powering through the swell and launching itself out of the water like a speed boat. We really get to appreciate how big the seas are when we see how it is affecting the passage of such a big ship. There is a cargo net hung over the side, just as Charley said there would be.

Ivan and I look at each other and voice our thoughts. "Is it too late to change our minds". The thought of that 9000 tonne ship coming along side us and us scrambling up the side suddenly fills me with my first real fear. The raft starts to look like good alternative.

We start to get kitted up. Life jackets, harness a few small bags. We remove the side safety wire and stanchions and throw the lot up onto the front deck.

We don't need to be snagged by these when the time comes. The closer this ship gets the more terrified I feel. Ivan and Charley are not looking very confident at all.

Charley manages to down three of his precious cans of black, saying something about not letting them go to the bottom. Time has passed quickly and we have neglected the baling.

The pressure pump is slowing the water down, but it is losing ground. I dive down and bale some more water. The crossing to the ship might take longer than we expect. Ivan comes down to help and has a last look around his boat. He has had it over ten years and stored a lot of memories.

The inside is a shambles. Remains of the last meal of defrosted meatloaf are scattered on the floor and oily water is all up the wall near the sink, where we have been emptying the bucket. There are the hand made wall coverings in each cabin and his lovely glass ship in a bottle. All will be lost.

Back on deck and the ship is almost along side. The captain is using the bow and stern thrusters to maneuver the ship onto us. A masterful effort. The crew throw us a lead line and then feed us a rope to tie onto our bow.

The boats come together for the first time with a gut wrenching crash that jars both Charley and I off our feet. Ivan is running the engine and endeavouring to steady the boat near the ship.

The boat hits again, this time crashing the mast and rig into the hull of the ship. I can't see the damage that is being caused, not that it will make much difference in a short while, but no boat as beautiful as ours should be treated in such a way.

Charley and I leave the front of the boat and head back to the cargo net. Ivan is already half way up and we wait until he is clear. The boat and the ship are pounding together and the swell is lifting the boat up and down next to the ship, by about 3 metres.

Together, Charley and I wait for the boat to get to the top of a swell and we grab the rope netting and climb. Oddly enough I am not scared at that moment. I am focused intently on getting to the top, and I still have time to check out Charley to see if he is OK.

You seem to think very fast at a time like that. The wire rigging of the mast rakes both Charley and myself and could have easily sent us into the water, but this is not an option.

I hang on and climb a bit more and get to the top. Many hands grab me and I half climb and half lifted over the edge. Charley is right next to me and we are safe. The ships crew cut the rope holding GADJET and it quickly drifts astern.

We are hustled inside and I don't even get a look at the boat as it drifts away. I lose Ivan for a while as we are directed this way and that through the ship.

He had apparently stayed to wish his boat farewell.

Something probably best done by himself anyway.

A hot bath, with endless hot water. The bath is huge and set up like a Korean bath house. I am not going to say too much on this, but we all ended up in it together.

They herded us in like cattle, but we all kept to our separate sides, although it was quite funny. Then we had food and a carton of warm beer delivered to our temporary cabin. This set the stage for how we were to be treated for the next two

days.

These people who have so much less than us treated us much better than we probably deserved.

The officers and crew were a really good bunch of guys. It was two days to our destination. We were now going to Lyttelton Harbour near Christchurch on the south island, instead of Auckland.

The crew on the Orion had told us just before we left that we had made the news back home.

Straight away we knew the questions that our wives would be asking. Naively we thought that in two days we would get to Lyttelton, get off the ship, have a beer and a pizza and catch a flight home. All fairly low key. The ship was to be out home for a third night as it was delayed from entering into the harbour.

As soon as it was anchored nearly the whole crew headed for the back deck with their fishing rods. Life is so terribly boring for the crew on ships such as these. While watching this entertaining scene we heard that the pilot boat was coming out. Apparently not to get the ship, but to get us. It all seemed very strange, but we got ourselves ready and said goodbye to all our new friends.

We had been made so welcome that I was nearly tempted to sign on and go to Chile with the ship. The pilot boat arrived and as we leaned over to see what was going on Ivan and I were stunned to see our wives, Sandra and Sybille on the boat. We couldn't get down the ladder quick enough.

There were plenty of tears and a whole lot of smiles. I realized then that this must have been a much bigger deal to everyone than we had first appreciated. The adventure was over. All I wanted to do now was get to a phone so I could hear my sons voices. Charley stayed on in New Zealand.

He was charged with the responsibility of going to see the rescue crew to thank them and returning their radio. They were so terribly important to us. We were all pretty shattered about leaving the boat.

Nothing can bring it back, but the trip to New Zealand was not completed and so we have some unfinished business. We are looking forward to having another go at some time in the future. Hopefully with a more positive result.

The End

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